

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-02 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-02 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-15
SAB-02 AID-05 TRSE-00 OMB-01 /082 W
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R 171835Z MAR 78
FM AMEMBASSY PANAMA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6138
INFO PANCANAL
USCINCSO

UNCLAS SECTION 1 OF 2 PANAMA 1802

DEPT FOR ARA/PAF AND PAN

USCINCSO FOR J-2 AND PAO

PANCANAL FOR IO

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: SOPN, PN
SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION

THE FOLLOWING SENT FROM USIS/PANAMA ACTION USINFO INFO SECSTATE
DATED 17 MAR 78 REPEATED FOR YOUR ACTION/INFO UUOTE

MEDIA REACTION

1. PANAMA CITY -- REACTION TO THE SENATE VOTE ON THE NEUTRALITY
TREATY IS GUARDED IN TODAY'S PRESS. GOVERNMENT-CONTROLLED
CRITICA CARRIES SPREAD HEAD: "PANAMA RECEIVES RATIFICATION
CALMLY," SISTER MATUTINO, "TORRIJOS TELL CARTER: THE
PANAMANIAN PEOPLE WOULD NOT ACCEPT OCCUPATION DISGUISED AS
NEUTRALITY" AND "RATIFICATION OF TREATY: MORAL VICTORY FOR
CARTER." (PRINCIPLE HEADLINE IN MATUTINO IS DEDICATED TO ALDO
MOR KIDNAPPING.) SEMI-INDEPENDENT LA ESTRELLA: "WITH
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RESERVATIONS: THREATY OF NEUTRALITY RATIFIED BY U.S. SENATE,
68 TO 32."

2. THE TONE OF THE PANAMANIAN REACTION WAS APPARENTLY SET BY
TREATY NEGOTIATOR ROMULO ESCOBAR B. IN LENGTHY RADIO STATEMENT
SHORTLY AFTER THE SENATE VOTE IN WHICH HE READ THE LETTERS
EXCHANGED BY CARTER AND TORRIJOS AND COMMENTED

ON THE VOTE INDICATING IT WOULD BE CAREFULLY EVALUATED BEFORE REACHING A FINAL JUDGEMENT TO DETERMINE IF PANAMANIAN DIGNITY HAD BEEN "STAINED."

3. AFTER THE READING OF THE RATHER LENGTHY LETTERS AND AN EXPLANATION OF THE CRITERIA PANAMA WOULD USE IN EVALUATING THE RESERVATIONS, ESCOBAR ENDED ON A POSITIVE NOTE, ADMITTING THAT, "IN PRINCIPLE, WE CAN TELL THE PUBLIC THAT THE FUNDAMENTAL OBJECTIVES THAT PANAMA SEEKS IN THE TORRIJOS-CARTER TREATIES HAVE NOT BEEN ALTERED WITH THOSE RESERVATIONS THAT THE SENATE HAS INTRODUCED AND THAT, IN PRINCIPLE ALSO BECAUSE THE REVOLUTIONARY GOVERNMENT HAS NOT MADE AN IN DEPTH STUD OF THE PROBLEM, BUT BROADLY SPEAKING, IN PRINCIPLE AND GENERICALLY SPEAKING, WE CONSIDER THAT WE CAN LIVE WITH THEM (OR "CAN SWALLOW, "SON BASTANTE POTABLES" IN SPANISH) SINCE THEY DON'T AFFECT THE BASIC MEANING OR THE ESSENCE OF THE CONTENT OF THE NEUTRALITY TREATY, ESPECIALLY THE BASIC ELEMENTS OF THAT TREATY SUCH AS THE

MILITARY WITHDRAWAL ON DECEMBER 31, 1999.

4. ALL SPANISH PAPERS ALSO CARRIED THE TEXT OF THE CARTER-TORRIJOS EXCHANGE OF LETTERS. THE TORRIJOS LETTER, DATED MARCH 15, IN ANSWER TO THE CARTER LETTER OF THE SAME DAY, EMPLOYS THE SAME LANGUAGE AS ESCOBAR'S STATEMENT WITH REFERENCE TO THE CRITERIA WITH WHICH PANAMA WILL JUDGE THE TREATY MODIFICATIONS. THE STUDY OF THE DOCUMENTS, SAYS TORRIJOS, WILL BE BASED ON THE FOLLOWING UNCLASSIFIED

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CONCEPTS: "FOR PANAMA ANY RESERVATION THAT STAINS THE NATIONAL DIGNITY OR TWISTS OR CHANGES THE OBJECTIVES OR IS INTENDED TO IMPEDE THE EFFECTIVE EXERCISE OF SOVEREIGNTY OF PANAMA OVER ALL OF ITS TERRITORY, OR THE TURNOVER OF THE CANAL AND THE MILITARY WITHDRAWAL ON DECEMBER 31, 1999 WILL BE UNACCEPTABLE."

5. TORRIJOS CONTINUES: "THEREFORE I GREATLY APPRECIATE YOUR WORDS THAT SAID OBJECTIVES WILL ABSOLUTELY NOT BE CHANGED BY AMENDMENTS OR RESERVATIONS. THAT REAFFIRMS MY BELIEF AS TO THE HIGH MORAL TONE AND THE HONESTY WHICH CHARACTERIZES YOU AS A LEADER AND A PERSON."

6. ALL SPANISH PAPERS ALSO CARRY A FOREIGN MINISTRY COMMUNIQUE RELEASED LAST EVENING WHICH BASICALLY EXPLAINS THAT PANAMA'S JUDGEMENT OF THE NEUTRALITY TREATY MUST AWAIT THE RATIFICATION OF THE PANAMA CANAL TREATY IN AS MUCH AS THE PANAMANIAN PEOPLE APPROVED THE TWO TREATIES TOGETHER.

7. IN ADDITION TO THE USUAL WIRE SERVICE STORIES MATUTINO AND LA ESTRELLA CARRY PAGE ONE A BYLINE STORY FROM DIANA AROSEMENA, PRESS ATTACHE IN THE PANAMANIAN EMBASSY IN WASHINGTON. MS. AROSEMENA HAS BEEN FILING STORIES SINCE ARRIVAL IN WASHINGTON

FEBRUARY 1. WHILE HER ARTICLE WAS CARRIED AS A NEWS STORY, SHE MADE THE FOLLOWING EDITORIAL COMMENTS IN TODAY'S CABLE: "SENATOR DECONCINI, IN HIS OWN WORDS, PRESENTED HIS RESERVATION 'THE NAME OF THE PEOPLE OF ARIZONA.' DE CONCINI CERTAINLY WASN'T THINKING MUCH ABOUT THE VITAL INTERESTS OF THE UNITED STATES MUCH LESS ABOUT THE PEOPLE OF PANAMA JMZ

8. LATER IN THE ARTICLE, MS. AROSEMENA COMMENTS: "THE AMERICAN SENATE RATIFIED THE NEUTRALITY TREATY, SETTING THE PATTERN FOR THE NEXT TREATY. EVERYTHING INDICATES THAT THE PANAMA CANAL TREATY BEFORE THE U.S. SENATE WILL BE A HISTORY THAT REPEATS ITSELF. IT IS EASY TO PREDICT IT WILL BE ADOPTED. BUT IS NOT SO EASY TO CONVINCE TORRIJOS OR THE PANAMANIAN PEOPLE THAT IN ORDER TO KEEP THE CANAL IN OPERATION IT MAY BE NECESSARY TO

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CLOSE HOSPITALS, CLOSE SCHOOLS OR ELIMINATE THE SCHOOL NUTRITION PROGRAM... NEITHER IS IT EASY TO PUT THE PANAMANIAN PEOPLE IN THE PREDICAMENT THAT IF THE FREE TRANSIT OF THE CANAL IS DISTURBED BY AN EARTHQUAKE OR A FLU EPIDEMIC, THEY MUST DIG IN TO REPEL AN INVASION."

9. MS. AROSEMENA CONTINUES: THE SENATE HAS BEEN SO CONCERNED ABOUT WHAT MIGHT POSSIBLY OCCUR IN PANAMA AFTER 1999 THAT IT IS SURPRISING THAT IT HASN'T CONTEMPLATED PROVISIONS FOR DEFENDING THE CANAL AGAINST AN INVASION FROM MARS OR A STAR WAR. THE TREATY THAT WAS JUST RATIFIED IS THE FIRST OF TWO WHICH WERE JOINTLY AGREED UPON BY THE TWO NATIONS SEPTEMBER 7, ...THE SENATE SEEMS TO HAVE ASSUMED RESPONSIBILITIES NOT CONTEMPLATED BY THE ORIGINAL DOCUMENTS; ITS NOW UP TO THE PANAMANIAN GOVERNMENT AND PEOPLE TO SAY THE LAST WORD."

10. AT LEAST ONE RADIO COMMENTATOR THIS MORNING COMPLAINED OF THE LACK OF EXACT TEXTS AVAILABLE TO THE PUBLIC ON WHICH TO BASE AN EVALUATION OF THE RESERVATIONS. THOUGH REFERENCES TO THE DECONCINI AND OTHER RESERVATIONS HAVE APPEARED IN SEVERAL WIRE SERVICE STORIES, THE VERBATIM TEXT OF ALL THE RESERVATIONS HAS NOT APPEARED AND WAS NOT QUOTED BY ESCOBAR B. IN HIS LONG RADIO STATEMENT.

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L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-02 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-15

SAB-02 AID-05 TRSE-00 OMB-01 /082 W

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FM AMEMBASSY PANAMA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6139

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11. ROMULO ESCOBAR B. HAS CALLED A NEWS CONFERENCE FOR 2 PM EST THIS AFTERNOON BUT DID NOT INDICATE THE REASON FOR SAME.

12. EDITORIAL REACTION IN THE MORNINGS REFLECTED THE SAME TONE OF CAUTIONS APPROVAL SIGNALLED BY ESCOBAR B. GOVERNMENT-CONTROLLED CRITICAL COMMENTS: "APPARENTLY THE NATION HAS WON A GREAT VICTORY, BECAUSE THIS PRONOUNCEMENT OF THE MOST IMPORTANT SENATE IN THE WORLD CAN BE INTERPRETED TO MEAN APPROVAL OF THE CANAL TREATY IN THE SAME HALL AND PERHAPS WITH FEWER BATTLES." AFTER REFERRING TO THE ESCOBAR B., WHO WAS "FAR FROM EUPHORIC" IN HIS STATEMENT, CRITICAL CONCLUDES: "WITH THE FOREGOING PREMISES, WE ARE NOT EUPHORIC OVER A CONDITIONAL RATIFICATION, THOUGH WE BELIEVE THAT SOMETHING BIG HAS BEEN ACHIEVED WITH THE DEFEAT OF THE REACTIONARY GROUP WHOSE MEMBERS IN YESTERDAY'S DEBATE RELIED ON INSULTS AND SUPERIORITY AS THEIR BEST DIALECTIC WEAPONS."

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13. GOVERNMENT-CONTROLLED MATUTINO IN ITS LEAD EDIT SAW THE VOTE AS "AN ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY AND HIGHLY PROMISING FIRM STEP FORWARD." REFERRING TO THE CONDUCT OF THE SENATE, MATUTINO SAID THE FOLLOWING: "AS FOR THE AMERICAN SENATE, IT SHOULD BE RECOGNIZED THAT THE SENATORS OF ONE TENDENCY OR ANOTHER, MAINTAINED AT ALL TIMES THE DEMOCRATIC TONE WHICH IS THE TRADITIONAL ATTRIBUTE OF THE CONDUCT OF THE LEGISLATIVE ORGAN OF THE UNITED STATES."

14. SEMI-INDEPENDENT LA ESTRELLA IN ITS USUAL NON-COMMITTAL

STYLE, ADVISES THAT THE TREATY MUST BE STUDIED TO SEE IF THE
ORIGINAL TEXT HAS BEEN RADICALLY ALTERED, HOWEVER, "IN ANY
EVENT, IT IS NOT ADVISABLE FOR NOW TO AWAIT WITH VIGILANCE THE
RATIFICATION OF THE PANAMA CANAL TREATY." ITEM UNQUOTE
JORDEN

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Message Attributes

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